

Naked Came the Detective

Glendall C. Jackson III

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A winking, self-aware mystery text headed by an engaging heroine, Naked Came the Detective lifts the veil on high-class sex work.

Glendall C. Jackson III's risqué detective novella *Naked Came the Detective* sets a murder mystery in the world of sex work.

Its title paying homage to the 1969 literary hoax *Naked Came the Stranger*, this short book reverses the trope of a call girl getting murdered by making the high-end escort the sleuth who investigates the case. The unnamed narrator—an economics student at Brown University who's paying off her college costs with escort work, and who loves detective novels—discovers that a regular and profitable client of hers was killed just after their liaison, and she seeks to get to the bottom of the businessman's brutal death by using her high-profile connections in Washington, DC.

Each chapter focuses on a particular client who provides new details and revelations. The escort pieces together the puzzle at a remove, muffling the action. Further, her investigation relies more on serendipity than deduction, taking some of the procedural pleasure out of the investigative process. However, humor enlivens the book, as do literary turns: a client with a soothing voice is like having a personal NPR station; elsewhere, "the gloaming, silver-tinged streaks of clouds stretched across the horizon, gradually transforming into vivid shades of pink and lavender."

While there are prurient scenes, double entendres, and explicit depictions of erotic affairs among its story, the text is heavy with exposition. It explains how the escort business works in lurid detail, breaking down slang and including tidbits about the business end of the industry, as with a note about the importance of populating the service's website with fresh photographs. The tone in such sections is detached, almost academic. Further, the narration is filtered through a newspaper reporter, Chris, who is also a client of the escort but who is tangential to the book's actions. While the escort is smart, sassy, and strong, Chris's insertions have a distancing effect. Further, the escort's background is only sketched in—as are her clients and fellow escorts, who are often rendered in a few quick strokes, even stereotyped. However, the book's ending is satisfying, tidy—and in keeping with its heroine's characterization.

A bawdy mystery novella, *Naked Came the Detective* lifts the veil on high-class sex work with its entertaining diversions.

JOSEPH S. PETE (September 21, 2023)

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